

Message Text

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC 8418

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMCONSUL BREMEN

AMCONSUL DUSSELDORF

AMCONSUL FRANKFURT

AMCONSUL HAMBURG

AMCONSUL STUTTGART

USMISSION USBERLIN

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 MUNICH 1250

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, GW

SUBJECT: CSU READING OF POLITICAL SITUATION IN BONN

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY. TWO RANKING OFFICIALS OF THE CHRISTIAN SOCIAL UNION (CSU) BELIEVE THAT CHANCELLOR HELMUT SCHMIDT'S RELATIONS WITH HIS CABINET AND THE SPD BUNDESTAG "FRAKTION," AFTER DETERIORATING STEADILY IN RECENT MONTHS, REACHED A NEW LOW IN PAST 7-10 DAYS. THESE OFFICIALS FEEL SCHMIDT MAY HAVE TO STEP DOWN AS CHANCELLOR IF THIS DETERIORATION CONTINUES. AT SAME TIME, THEY ARE CONVINCED THAT SPD/FDP COALITION WILL CERTAINLY SURVIVE IN SHORT RUN AND PROBABLY REMAIN IN OFFICE UNTIL 1980. ONE OF THESE OFFICIALS, A TOP LIEUTENANT OF CSU CHAIRMAN STRAUSS, INDICATED THAT CSU IS NOW TOTALLY DISENCHANTED WITH OPPOSITION LEADER KOHL. END SUMMARY.

2 GEROLD TANDLER CSU SECRETARY GENERAL AND AUGUST
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LANG, CHAIRMAN OF CSU LANDTAG "FRAKTION" (PROTECT BOTH), DISCUSSED POLITICAL SITUATION IN BONN AND BAVARIA WITH CONGEN ON SEPARATE OCCASIONS APRIL 28. THIS MESSAGE REPORTS HIGHLIGHTS OF THEIR READING OF BONN POLITICAL SCENE.

3. SCHMIDT AND HIS RELATIONSHIPS TO SPD AND CABINET. THE CHANCELLOR ALLEGEDLY NO REPEAT NO LONGER HAS CONTROL OVER

HIS CABINET OR SPD BUNDESTAG "FRAKTION." HE REPORTEDLY THREATENED LAST WEEK TO OBTAIN MAJORITY FOR HIS PROGRAM BY ENLISTING THE SUPPORT OF THE CDU/CSU OPPOSITION AND THE "FEW" GOOD PEOPLE IN HIS OWN PARTY. THE CSU LEADERSHIP SEES SCHMIDT AS SUFFERING FROM EMOTIONAL PROBLEMS, PERHAPS EVEN "AN EMOTIONAL IMBALANCE," RESULTING LARGELY FROM HIS THYROID CONDITION. HE IS CONSTANTLY SMOKING CIGARETTES OR HIS PIPE, TAKING SNUFF AND POPPING PILLS. SCHMIDT IS SEEN AS A PERSON WHO REQUIRES SUCCESS. OTHERWISE HE IS SUBJECT TO DEPRESSIONS, AS IS THE CASE NOW.

4. IF SCHMIDT GOES. TANDLER WOULD NOT BE SURPRISED AT ALL IF SCHMIDT FOUND HIMSELF COMPELLED TO STEP DOWN IN THE NEAR FUTURE. HE ACKNOWLEDGED, HOWEVER, THE DIFFICULTIES THE SPD WOULD HAVE IN FINDING A SUCCESSOR. TANDLER MENTIONED THE NAME OF MINISTER OF FINANCE APEL, WHO SHOULD NOT REPEAT NOT BE UNDERESTIMATED AS A POLITICAL OPERATOR. TANDLER WAS ALSO CONVINCED THAT SPD CHAIRMAN BRANDT STILL HAS AMBITIONS TO MAKE A COMEBACK. DESPITE THE MANY OBSTACLES BRANDT WOULD FACE, TANDLER WOULD NOT REPEAT NOT RULE OUT POSSIBILITY THAT SPD WOULD BACK A NEW BID FOR CHANCELLORSHIP BY BRANDT.

5. FUTURE OF SPD/FDP COALITION. BOTH TANDLER AND LANG CONSIDER A CHANGE BEFORE 1980 UNLIKELY. TANDLER IS CONVINCED THAT GENSCHER WANTS TO HOLD ONTO POWER AND REMAIN IN COALITION WITH THE SPD UNDER VIRTUALLY ALL CONCEIVABLE CIRCUMSTANCES. LANG EMPHASIZED THE IMPORTANCE OF SPD BUNDESTAG "FRAKTION" LEADER WEHNER'S CONFIDENTIAL

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CONVICTION THAT THE SPD MUST REMAIN IN POWER. WEHNER, SAID LANG, IS FULLY AWARE OF HOW HARD IT WAS FOR THE SPD TO COME TO POWER, AND HOLDS THAT THE SPD MUST REMAIN IN POWER AS LONG AS POSSIBLE. LANG SEEMS TO THINK THAT WEHNER MIGHT EVEN OPT FOR AN ATTEMPT AT A GRAND COALITION WITH THE CDU/CSU BEFORE RELINQUISHING POWER.

6. CSU ON STRATEGY TOWARD FDP. THE CSU REMAINS CONVINCED THAT FDP LEADERSHIP IS COMMITTED TO THE PRESENT COALITION. LANG OBSERVED THAT ALTHOUGH THE CDU AND CSU COULD SUPPORT UNCONDITIONALLY VIRTUALLY EVERYTHING THAT FRIDERICH'S SAYS AS ECONOMIC MINISTER, FRIDERICH'S AND THE FDP PEOPLE WHO REPRESENT THE FRIDERICH'S LINE ARE IN FAVOR OF MAINTAINING THE PRESENT COALITION. TANDLER INDICATED THAT STRAUSS' INTERVIEW TO "DIE WELT" (BONN 6312) DID NOT REPEAT NOT SIGNAL A NEW CSU ATTITUDE TOWARD THE FDP. EVEN IF STRAUSS WERE TO SPEAK ABOUT THE FDP IN MORE FRIENDLY TONES, SAID TANDLER, THIS WOULD NOT LEAD GENSCHER TO CHANGE HIS MIND ABOUT COALITION PARTNERS. LANG NOTED THAT CDU HAD AND

WOULD CONTINUE TO MAKE COALITION OFFERS TO FDP IN HESSE.
FACT THAT FDP IN HESSE AND SCHLESWIG HOLSTEIN CONTINUE
TO EXPRESS NO REPEAT NO INTEREST IN COALITION WITH CDU
IS ATTRIBUTABLE TO INFLUENCE OF GENSCHER AND FDP
LEADERSHIP IN BONN.

7. TANDLER ON KOHL. KOHL IS READY TO PROMISE EVERYONE
EVERYTHING IF HE THINKS THIS IS TO HIS ADVANTAGE, SAID
TANDLER. AFTERWARDS, WHEN REMINDED OF HIS PROMISES, HE
DISREGARDS THEM RECKLESSLY. KOHL IS FRIENDLY AND SMOOTH
WHEN THIS PROMOTES HIS OWN INTERESTS, BUT HE DROPS EVERYBODY
WHEN HE NO LONGER NEEDS THEM. HE HAS NO INTEREST IN
A MEETING OF THE JOINT CDU/CSU STRATEGY COMMISSION, AND
THEREFORE IS MAKING NO REPEAT NO EFFORT TO CONVENE ONE.
TANDLER SAID FLATLY THAT THERE WAS NOTHING REPEAT NOTHING
USEFUL THE CSU COULD DO IN COOPERATION WITH KOHL TO PREPARE
FOR 1980.
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8. CDU SECRETARY GENERAL GEISSLER. TANDLER CONSIDERS GEISSLER A CONGENIAL PERSON WITH WHOM ONE CAN WORK HARMONIOUSLY. GEISSLER HAS NOT, HOWEVER, IN TANDLER'S VIEW, DEMONSTRATED THE STATURE NECESSARY TO FILL HIS PRESENT POSITION. THE "BONN PARQUETTE" IS SLIPPERY, TANDLER OBSERVED, AN THE KONRAD-ADENAUER HAUS IS FULL OF VARIOUS FACTIONS WHICH PURSUE THEIR OWN INTERESTS.

9. COMMENT: IT WAS CLEAR THAT BOTH TANDLER AND LANG HAD HEARD STRAUSS DISCUSS THE BON SITUATION AT LENGTH QUITE RECENTLY. THE THRUST OF THEIR REMARKS ALMOST CERTAINLY REFLECTS STRAUSS' THINKING. THERE IS AN ELEMENT OF SOUR GRAPES IN TANDLER'S CHARACTERIZATION OF KOHL AS A PERSON WHO WELCHES ON HIS PROMISES AND COMMITMENTS. STRAUSS AND TANDLER PLACED GREAT STOCK IN KOHL'S AGREEMENT TO FORM A JOINT CDU/CSU STRATEGY COMMISSION, AND KOHL'S PREVARICATIONS IN CONVENING A MEETING OF THE COMMISSIO MUST INFURIATE STRAUSS. UNLESS KOHL'S RELATIONSHIP WITH STRAUSS IMPROVES, CONFIDENTIAL

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HOWEVER, HE WILL ALMOST CERTAINLY HAVE TO RECKON WITH DETERMINED CSU OPPOSITION AND BACKBITING FROM NOW ON. LIKE STRAUSS HIMSELF, BOTH TANDLER AND LANG, ESPECIALLY THE LATTER HAVE MORE THAN A LITTLE ADMIRATION FOR HELMUT SCHMIDT'S ABILITIES AS CHANCELLOR. THEY DISPLAYED NO REPEAT NO GLEE IN DESCRIBING THE SITUATION THEY THINK SCHMIDT FACES IN BONN.BETTS

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